

Heidegger's Movies

National Socialism and the End of Philosophy

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It is not easy to ascertain whether Heidegger ever went to the movies. His remarks upon the question of the cinema are rare. Among them, there are those of more general nature, pertaining to the question of technology. The publication of the *Bremer Vorträge* from 1949, however, offers a clue to the orientation of film in Heidegger's thought. In the preamble to his lectures, a *Hinweis*—translated as “The Point of Reference”—Heidegger begins with the following remark:

All distances in time and space are shrinking. Places that a person previously reached after weeks and months on the road are now reached by airplane overnight. What a person previously received news of only after years, if at all, is now experienced hourly over the radio in no time. The germination and flourishing of plants that remained concealed through the seasons, film now exhibits publicly in a single minute. Film shows the distant cities of the most ancient cultures as if they stood at this very moment amidst today's street traffic. Beyond this, film further attests to what it shows by simultaneously displaying the recording apparatus itself at work along with the humans who serve it. The pinnacle of all such removals of distance is achieved by television, which will soon race through and dominate the entire scaffolding and commotion of commerce. (Heidegger 2012, p. 3)

Modern technological machines turn the actual distance of an event into an apparent nearness, suspending the time previously required for this inversion. The film not only subverts, inverts the order of time and space, it is not only a technical medium, but also a medium that presents and integrates its users as further elements of the technical sphere. “The humans who serve it” are thus being integrated into the series of technical objects; the film is an apparatus that levels its users with the objects displayed. There is no question of art here; rather we are dealing with the problems of technical “domination” and “commotion.” In Heidegger’s text, *Verkehr* (Heidegger 2005², p. 3) can be understood as commerce, but in principle means traffic, thus taking up the velocity of the inversion of time and space and the mentioned “street traffic.” The film reproduces the most “distant cities amidst today’s street traffic” for one precise reason: it is itself an apparatus of traffic. Machines and the objects displayed by them are set into a circle of exchange, thereby leveling them and thus working toward the domination of all systems of traffic: travel, news, nature. What is suspended is the process of becoming in regards to the time of changing what is remote into something that is near. Heidegger continues:

Yet the hasty setting aside of all distances brings no nearness; for nearness does not consist in a small amount of distance. What confronts us at the shortest distance in terms of length, through the imagery of film or the sound of the radio, can remain remote to us. What is vastly far away in terms of length, can be near to us. Short distance is not already nearness. Great distance is not yet remoteness. (Heidegger 2012, p. 3)

Thus, this process achieves neither nearness nor remoteness; instead the result is a semblance of nearness and a semblance of remoteness. Effectively the technical machines present sameness: not the sameness of nearness and remoteness, but the sameness of an irritation, of a semblance of nearness or remoteness. It is this

irritation or semblance that is understood to be hasty and therefore subject to critique. Not only the hastiness, but the semblance is taken to be a problem. If the modern idea would suggest that it is precisely this semblance and this uncertainty that presents a new experience, Heidegger thinks from the point of the machine here. The machine suspends the distinctions of experiences and as such cannot bring about new experiences. The film produces an automatic repetition, the leveling of nearness and remoteness, as well as the leveling of the displayed objects and the apparatus itself. The apparatus effaces all distinctions, even the one between itself as an apparatus and those who use it. Moreover, the apparatus expands its logic beyond its own realm. In the context of the second talk on the *Ge-Stell* (translated in this text as “Positionality”) Heidegger states:

Radio and film belong to the standing reserve of this requisitioning through which the public sphere as such is positioned, challenged forth, and thereby first installed. Their machineries are pieces of inventory in the standing reserve, which bring everything into the public sphere and thus order the public sphere for anyone and everyone without distinction. (Heidegger 2012, p. 36)

The film is an apparatus that produces an order without distinction not only within the elements it displays, but also amidst its public beholders. The German text makes it clear that film and radio are not only *elements* of the *Bestand*, but that they also turn the public sphere itself into yet another element of the *Bestand*.¹ They are a disease. They do not only erase time and space but also install this indistinctiveness as a general paradigm. Thus while attempting to dominate their sphere via sameness, their sphere becomes endless since their realm is the public as such.

¹ “Ihre Maschinerien sind Bestand-Stücke des Bestandes, der alles ins Öffentliche bringt und so die Öffentlichkeit unterschiedslos für alles und jedes bestellt.” (Heidegger 1994, p. 38)

This argument on film and radio clearly prefigures the structure of Heidegger's general critical assessment of technology in his article on *The Question Concerning Technology* from 1954. The most famous declaration of this critique of technology claims that "the essence of technology is by no means anything technological." (Heidegger 1977, p. 4) If technology is essentially something not-technological, we can neither judge nor philosophically grasp it as such, i.e. as an in-itself. To understand or conceptually grasp technology therefore demands that it be understood in its essential inner difference. There are two major features that mark this inner difference. First, it is linked to the difference between the old Greek conception of *techne* as opposed to the modern conception of technology. Regarding *techne*, Heidegger underlines its "revealing" character; *techne* is "revealing" in the sense of "bringing-forth" as opposed to the sense of "manufacturing." (Heidegger 1977, p. 13) In turn, modern technology is a "challenge which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such." (*Ibid.*, p. 14) And second, the said inner difference is also inscribed in the process of modern technology as such. What is being challenged in nature in this manner becomes an element of the "standing-reserve" (*ibid.*, p. 17), of the *Bestand*, the stock, of the order of that which can be used. The *Bestand* is a process of storing and distributing, of a circulation of energy won out of nature. Within this circulation, the human being assumes an ambivalent position: although an agent is needed to organize and secure the circulation, the human is also in threat of becoming yet another element of this circle. However, the human being is not simply another element in this circle and of the *Bestand*; rather the human being is "claimed" by the "unconcealment of the unconcealed" (*ibid.*, pp. 18–9). It is this constellation of the human being in relation to nature that Heidegger then calls the *Ge-Stell*, translated here as "enframing": "Enframing means the way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which itself is nothing technological." (*Ibid.*, p. 20) Technology

then is deeply ambivalent: it is a medium for the human being's unconcealing essence, while also tending to integrate this human being into the series of the *Bestand*. To become an element of the *Bestand* constitutes the human being's fatal self-misunderstanding as it forgets about its essentially revealing character, finally misunderstanding itself to be but another element of the inventory or the stock of nature. Technology's Janus face allows the human being to dwell in its revealing essence, but it also turns everything into an element of the *Bestand*. This danger is not simply a danger of technology in the modern times, but a danger of technology as such. Thus, the double difference inscribed into technology unfolds the difference between *techne* and modern technology as a necessary development, while at the same time upholding the structural difference the human being marks in it.

Radio and film thus appear not only as apparatuses of technology as such, but rather as paradigms of the modern technology with its implicit concealing of the unconcealing capacity of technology. They do not only turn nature into *Bestand*, but also suspend the distinctions in the realm of the public—among human beings—and therewith the difference that distinguishes the human being from being only another element of the *Bestand*. It is a technology beyond hope, a technology that objectively introduces its own end: For a technology that has lost its ambivalent positioning of the human being might not be a technology any longer.

This feature of technology as having a tendency to abolish itself might then be considered as a third type of difference inscribed into it. But this difference exposes a difficulty of Heidegger's view on technology in general, for the theory of the *Ge-Stell* cannot conceive of a nihilist technological object. Thus, the third difference takes us beyond Heidegger by exceeding his line of thought from within.

In the general frame of technology, Heidegger clearly seeks a reorientation towards the old notion of the Greek *techne*: a bringing-forth as opposed to a pure challenging. But this reorienta-

tion would have to be a reorientation within modern technology, within the *Ge-Stell*. Towards the end of his essay on *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger alludes to the proximity between art and the originary poietic quality of *techne*: art is a possible reference point that might be capable of reorienting the modern man toward a different quality of production. At first glance, this salvaging role of the arts does not apply to radio and film. This is the question then: Is a poietic reorientation of radio and film impossible? In his critique of the audiovisual representation, Heidegger's essential point mainly regards film, the inclusion of the users of the apparatus and the public beholders within the apparatus itself. The apparatus thus does not only produce elements of the *Bestand*, but also presents an order without distinction to the beholders of its images. But the realm beyond it is the reality from which the film now cannot be distinguished—a reality that Heidegger addresses as “the public” and which, within the Greek order, would have been the structure of the *polis*. This realm is, in other words, the realm of the common. Film amounts to a tool of political realization. This is what film in its technological truth is: a realization of a *polis* without distinctions.

A poietic reorientation would have to draw on this moment of a political realization. A different film would have to present (make present) a different form of political reality. A different film would be a “bringing-forth” of a different reality, of a different audiovisual reality of the *polis*. A *polis* is a constellation of voices and images, and to change the modern technological reality, one would have to overcome the semblance and to redirect the order of time and space. Such a redirecting is not simply a question of reestablishing the near as near and the remote as remote, but has to reorganize the significance of space and time. The reorientation would have to be one that reorganizes the realities of voice and image by and through thought. This would be a different film, a real film: not the overcoming of the film as such, but an inscription of a different reality of voices and images.

1.

At a brief and coincidental moment of his career, Heidegger apparently found the alternative audiovisual reality to be realized. At a brief moment, history presented itself in Heidegger's eyes and ears as an alternative to the film and radio of the *Bestand*; history was performed as the alternative audiovisual reality.

Thus, one might consider Heidegger's engagement with National Socialism in the early thirties from a different angle: Philosophically speaking it opens a whole set of technological problems. Heidegger's attachment to National Socialism, far from begging the ethical or moral question of whether Heidegger was a fascist, whether this compels us to ban him from philosophy — since the latter always has to be “good” — or whether we are still allowed to study Heidegger's philosophy, first and foremost reveals some questions as to the philosophical technology that is expressed in this attachment. This raises at least two distinct but interrelated problems: The first is the problem of the relation of theory and practice. Theory, on the one hand, taken in its ancient Greek meaning, is often connected with the metaphor of “viewing” and “seeing,” while practice, on the other, is connected to the act, to “doing.” Heidegger has always refuted such a distinction; his philosophy can be summarized as an attempt at demonstrating how the original understanding of theory effectively already implies a certain action and at developing its consequences. But at the core of this refusal to bifurcate the realms of thought and being (or theory and practice) lurks the complicated question of philosophy itself as practice, i.e., of philosophy as practically inscribed into the real itself.

At the same time, Heidegger is also well aware of the problem of semblance, namely of its reality. A semblance has a (technical) reality of its own: the apparatus produces the reality of the seeming nearness of something actually remote, and its opposite is not the cancellation of semblance as such. The problem is not one of

the film images in comparison to pure reality; the problem is one of the inner direction of the image. This problem corresponds to the first, while nevertheless differing from it. The second problem opens the question of competing realities: Amidst the unfolding of the history of technology, a chance to follow another path, another direction or another idea of history might present itself.

These two technical problems revolve around the question of philosophy as a reality and therefore might be called technical problems. They are problems of the possible realization of philosophy, which, as such, is an abolition of philosophy. In this ambivalence, the two problems are analogous to the situation presented by film and radio: The reality of a film—as an alternative audiovisual reality—will abolish the film as semblant, and the reality of a philosophy might abolish philosophy both as the split between theory and practice and as the split between different histories taking place. But, as is the case with radio and film, the tendency toward the realization is found to persist from the very beginning. Radio and film present a necessary and unavoidable development of *techne* (as technology conceals and unconceals itself at the same time) and perhaps it is also necessary for philosophy to seek its own realization, since philosophy can only exist *as philosophy* by *existing* in the world. Thus, by sharing the ambivalence of technology, philosophy (at least for Heidegger) might be said to repeat its self-destructing movement.

2.

The most decisive document testifying to Heidegger's attachment to National Socialism is his 1933 speech, *Rektoratsrede*, which Heidegger delivered on the occasion of assuming the position of dean of the University of Freiburg. The *Rektoratsrede* has since become the most incriminating document in the endless trial against the philosopher that seeks to establish whether he was a fascist thinker. In recent years, this trial has gained new attention

with the 2014 publication of the “black notebooks,” comprising Heidegger’s late notes, which he used to write down into notebooks with black covers (see Heidegger 2016). In the heated debate concerning Heidegger’s relationship to National Socialism, some commentators viewed these notebooks, containing his anti-Semitic reflections, as the missing-link to finally condemn Heidegger, calling for a ban of his works from philosophy altogether.

It is perhaps worth recalling that the debate on Heidegger revolves around certain issues of almost incalculable dimensions or at least of very far-reaching importance. On the one hand, to judge Heidegger to have been a fascist or anti-Semitic philosopher and to ban his works from philosophy entails a very difficult question that often seems to be forgotten in the debate itself: The question is, briefly put, whether there can be such a thing as anti-Semitic or fascist philosophy. Is a definition of philosophy that allows for anti-Semitic or fascist variants of philosophy possible at all? If the answer is no (there cannot be an anti-Semite or fascist philosophy), one has to explain why philosophy needs to be “good” rather than “evil” or at least why philosophy is always neutral. If the answer is yes (there can be fascist or anti-Semite variants of philosophy) one has to explain how philosophy as a universal medium and, more importantly, as a medium of the universal is capable of contradicting itself by ascribing universality to a particularity and by excluding other particularities from the universal it proposes.

This is a question of contemporary philosophy: the choice between neutrality and affectivity or the suspension of such a choice refers contemporary philosophy back to the problem of theory and practice. Heidegger—on condition that he is a philosopher—is a contemporary philosopher for not only having invested his philosophical work in this question, but also for attempting to inscribe this work into a historical practice. From this point of view, Heidegger’s position is on the verge of philosophy. This does not only complicate the question of the trial (Who is the

philosopher being accused of not being one?) but also complicates the question as such: How do we think a historical reality from within a philosophy? And where does its reality start?

To clarify this, one needs to start from a more philosophical ground before approaching the depths of the *Rektoratsrede*. These philosophical grounds can be found in Heidegger's lectures from 1935, which he delivered at the same university under the title of an *Introduction to Metaphysics* (Heidegger 2014). The aim of these lectures is not only to give an introduction in the sense of an explanation of the main concepts and questions of metaphysics; the goal is rather to provide a description of both the necessity of metaphysics and the necessity of its inner faultiness. Metaphysics is a necessary moment within the history of being, but its original movement is also a continuous dissimulation. For our purpose here, we might consider metaphysics as a technology: It reveals thought while simultaneously blocking it.

Heidegger gives the lectures on metaphysics in 1935. At a certain point in the lectures, Heidegger pauses to consider the actual historical situation, the historical localization of his speech, and this situation is, as he sees it, a specific situation of Europe:

This Europe, in its unholy blindness always on the point of cutting its own throat, lies today in the great pincers between Russia on the one side and America on the other. Russia and America, seen metaphysically, are both the same: the same hopeless frenzy of unchained technology and of the rootless organization of the average man. (Heidegger 2014, p. 41)

Thus, Europe finds itself in the middle between two variants of the same, i.e. between two variants of unchained technology under the reign of the average. The quote already implies that Europe differs from the situation, although we are told neither why nor in what way. But in the middle of the middle of this historical topology we of course find Germany, the difference that is threatened while at once standing for the possible turning point:

We lie in the pincers. Our people, as standing in the center, experiences the most intense pressure—our people, the people richest in neighbors and hence the most endangered people, and for all that, the metaphysical people. (Heidegger 2014, p. 42)

The attribution of a metaphysical trait is the consequence of the status of Germans as the most endangered people. Russia and America are, so to speak, lost for any retrieving of the question of Being. Interestingly enough, this argument is implicitly built on the possibility of qualitative differences in the state of metaphysics. Metaphysics and its forgetting of Being—as the unfolding of unchained technology—is not a state of Being as such, but rather presents itself in different shapes or qualities. But Heidegger's argument changes in quality when he presents metaphysics as unfolding a set of pincers to finally destroy the wedged other. For if he might be able to explain why metaphysics unfolds its tendencies in different shapes, the *localization* of a middle of this process is a pure injunction. It is an injunction and will stay one throughout the lectures on metaphysics. On other occasions, Heidegger attempts to establish the specificity of the German people via the notion of language, however here any such attempt is missing. Even if it were true that America and Russia represent the same “unchained technology,” no specificity of the German people can be inferred from this. What if they were the most boring people? The metaphysical role of the German people is a pure result of an indirect localization. What effectively follows from his account on technology, though, is the possibility of a qualitatively differentiated development of the unfolding of technology. This possibility is the consequence of technology being a realization and materialization (machines that obtain and reproduce energy) in space and time. Thus, there might be differences in the degree of concealment. If Heidegger proceeds to the deduction of a specific task for the German people as a consequence of its endangered situation, then this localization is a fiction. A fiction moreover that in a revealing way closes the

philosophical questioning at a specific point: It gives an answer at the point where it purports to insist on the question. Philosophy ends here, but we do not yet know why:

We are sure of this vocation; but this people will gain a fate from its vocation only when it creates *in itself* a resonance, a possibility of resonance for this vocation, and grasps its tradition creatively. All this implies that this people, as a historical people, must transpose itself—and with it the history of the West—from the center of their future happening into the originary realm of the powers of Being. Precisely if the great decision regarding Europe is not to fall upon the path of annihilation—precisely then can this decision come about only through the development of new, historically *spiritual* forces from the center. (Heidegger 2014, pp. 42–3)

Again, Heidegger delivers these lectures in the summer term of 1935. He envisions a decision facing Europe, but since Europe is in the middle of the pincers, the whole world is endangered; the decision finally amounts to the German people's ability to safeguard Europe and the world by acting upon their spiritual vocation. For Heidegger, this vocation amounts to the salvation of the world from the path of annihilation. And in four years this same German people will open the path of annihilation they were on already in 1935.

The interesting point is perhaps not so much Heidegger's somewhat schematic vision of the historical situation, but rather its determination as viewed from the point of metaphysics. In a simplified reading one might take this passage as deviating from the actual philosophical path that Heidegger is pursuing. Or else, it might be that he is only trying to illustrate his account on the question of being and that these attempts carelessly take their own turns and get entangled in awkward assumptions about the German people. In any case this description could be a distraction.

Contrary to the tempting easiness of such a solution, Heidegger's view on the German situation and its metaphysical vocation, while complicated, is the direct consequence of his account of

metaphysics, on the one hand, and a fiction, a decision, a will, on the other. This double game echoes the analysis of the historical situation of the German people in the *Rektoratsrede* from 1933, in which we find detailed propositions on how the German people will be able to take up their vocation.

But what is a “metaphysical people”? One has to take a step back at this point to consider the question of metaphysics. In the lectures of the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger understands metaphysics to be organized around a central question: “Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?” (Heidegger 2014, p. 1) This question is the first, most central and most essential question to be asked, because for Heidegger it is impossible *not* to ask it: Any question that wants to know what something is implicitly has to ask why there is something instead of nothing. The most originary question, however, entails a problem, because it orients the philosophical tradition of metaphysics toward an understanding of being as that which “is” or “exists.” For Heidegger, the question “Why is there something rather than nothing” implies an understanding of being as something existent. But being as such is quite different from anything that exists, because being qua being combines all the existing things. At this point the question proves to be a barrier; it hides the question of being qua being. Being qua being, being as the reason and ground of the existing things, does not find its place in the question of metaphysics, but is rather displaced by metaphysics such that metaphysics displays the forgetting of being qua being from the start.

But metaphysics is not simply wrong and to be abolished: in a certain sense, the question of being qua being can only be asked on the ground of this metaphysical question itself; it springs from there. The metaphysical question exceeds itself, it leads us to another question that needs to be developed, and this other question is what Heidegger calls “The prior question: How does it stand with Being?” (Heidegger 2014, p. 36) We realize that we cannot grasp being qua being, “neither by way of beings, nor in

beings—nor anywhere else at all” (*ibid.*, p. 37). But “[w]e are asking about the ground for the fact that beings *are*, and are what they *are*, and that there is not nothing instead” (*ibid.*, p. 36). And so, this ungraspable ground, to which our question is directing us, appears to be “almost like Nothing, or in the end *entirely* so” (*ibid.*, p. 39). “Being—a vapor, an error!“, Heidegger exclaims with reference to Nietzsche (*ibid.*, p. 40). But this can only be the climax of a loss. And thus, in the end, it might be that we are “long since fallen out of Being, without knowing it” (*ibid.*, p. 41).

This is the moment at which Heidegger interjects his analysis of the historical situation. At the point of our unwitting potential falling out of being, Heidegger addresses the actual metaphysical situation of his time. And this is a time that might be outside of being. The question “How does it stand with Being” (*ibid.*) proves to be a historical question. There is a relation to being to be upheld or to be lost, even if there is perhaps no guarantee for the stability or the loss of this relation.

Heidegger presents his analysis of the historical situation as an analysis of the metaphysical state the world is in, which by now we can understand to be an analysis of the existent beings and not of the state of being qua being. But why should it be the case that the duality of Russian socialism and American capitalism presents a metaphysical equivalence? Why should we believe that these forces present the falling out of Being? Why should there be a metaphysical people with a vocation? A called people? The vocation calls for the possibility to exceed the metaphysical arrangement of the world, to take the step from an order of existing beings to the question of being qua being. Nietzsche’s conviction might be faulty, but the only possible answer is to ask the question of Being over and again.

After pursuing this line of thought a little further—the contemporary distance from the truth of being—Heidegger comes back to the question of being qua being, at first attempting to analyze the word *being* in its grammatical as well as etymological

conditions. But as both reveal only “blurring and blending” (*ibid.*, p. 81) and do not give us any reliable hint regarding the question of being qua being, we might think that we can only start from distinct, existent beings. For Heidegger, this is a misunderstanding: The fact that we are unable to establish a safe ground for our understanding of being qua being does not allow us to ignore that question. As a matter of fact, he insists, we always already understand being as such. Being as such is not an “empty word” (*ibid.*, p. 98). Thus, at the end of the etymological and grammatical analysis we get a repetition of and an addition to the observation that Heidegger already made in relation to the question of metaphysics: Although being qua being withdraws itself, we cannot let go of this very question of being qua being. In the uses of the word being—in the sense of “there is something”—a sense of being is indicated. The fact that this indicated being is something that withdraws itself should not be taken as a sign of the impossibility to conceptually grasp it; instead, it needs to be taken as a result that necessitates a change in the *method*.

Heidegger then continues in a different manner. Instead of pursuing the path of what is given—the metaphysical question, the grammar and the etymology of being—he proposes a “restriction” of being (*ibid.*, p. 102). A “restriction” in German is a *Beschränkung* (Heidegger 1976, p. 100), which literally means “to set limits,” but limits that can be passed over. Thus, we might also speak of a principle of a deliberate limiting or closing off of the area of being qua being. *Beschränkung* is also reminiscent of the Hegelian difference between *Grenze* and *Schranke*, often translated as “limit” and “limitation,” or “limit” and “border.” We can assume that Heidegger is using this difference consciously, as Heidegger was a very careful reader of Hegel, whom we might call his principle opponent. *Beschränkung* can then be understood as the negative limitation of being reflected from within being itself, i.e., as a limitation to be exceeded. This *Beschränkung* follows upon the reflections on the indications in the existent uses

of the word being, which now can be understood as the limit of our understanding of being. Rather, being needs to be grasped from the viewpoint of the limitation, that is, from the viewpoint of being itself: “a meditation on the provenance of our *concealed history*” (*ibid.*, p. 101). This limitation or “restriction” of being qua being then proceeds via four categorical distinctions. We will see that being qua being as such is to be distinguished from becoming, seeming, thinking, and the ought.

The first two distinctions between being qua being and becoming, and between being qua being and seeming can be reconstructed quickly. The distinction between being and becoming seems to be inevitable. “What becomes, is not yet. What is, no longer needs to become.” (*Ibid.*, p. 105) Heidegger combines phrases of Parmenides and Heraclitus: Parmenides is saying that being qua being is the “perdurance of the constant” (*ibid.*, p. 106), while Heraclitus famously states *panta rhei*, “all is in flux.” For Heidegger, both statements belong essentially together, as will be shown in the following. The second distinction is that between being and seeming where seeming is taken in the double sense of the German *Schein*: seeming and appearing. For Heidegger, we have lost the original unity of being and appearing: appearing is the ground of being and being essentially is appearing. The original combination of being and appearing in a single figure implies that the Greeks did not yet possess the fundamental distinction between the object and the subject; for them, appearing is rather the essential appearing of being as such. But the transition is fluid: once being has appeared, it takes on a figure and thus turns into something that could be recognized as “objective.” As such, appearing becomes an object of the *doxa*, that is, it becomes, so to speak, excluded from its originary unity with being. So, there is a permanent process leading from the side of truth to the side of meaning, and the latter is inevitable. With the sophists and with Plato, appearance is degraded to a simple seeming and is deemed false, while the idea of being is ranked higher than the truth of being. While this announces a

movement of decay that originates in the beginning, Heidegger concludes that the human being has to go three ways: to being as such, to nothingness and to the appearance as standing to some extent half way between being and nothingness.

The third distinction concerns being and thought. "In the seemingly irrelevant separation between *Being and thinking* we have to recognize that fundamental orientation of the spirit of the West that is the real target of our attack." (Heidegger 2014, p. 129) This distinction is of such an importance because it mediates the first two distinctions: In the distinction between being and thought being as such is already posited as something, it already takes the shape of something. But here, once again a movement of decay is to be recognized. Thought is disconnected from the touch with being especially in logics. Logic is a thought that has lost touch with original being, *physis*, as the original appearing and disappearing that *is* being.

And it is precisely at this point that Heidegger comes back once again to the actual state of being, to the actual situation, to the moment of history in which his own intervention is situated: He comments on the general misuse of thought that in his time is called intellectualism. Now, although it might be right to reject intellectualism, there is an immanent danger in believing logical thought to be more righteous than intellectualism. However, for Heidegger, they are two sides of the same coin: Logical thinking and intellectualism share "the same roots" (*ibid.*, p. 135). He continues by making an interesting remark, thus short-circuiting the question of intellectualism with the political situation: "This reactive flight of the spirit into the past," he says, "which stems in part from natural inertia and in part from a deliberate effort, is now becoming fertile soil for political reaction" (*ibid.*). Instead of a conservative return to a past that is only the semblance of a past, we would rather need "a genuine and original thinking, [...] *nothing else*" (*ibid.*).

But how are the shapes of this originary thinking to be understood? It might be already clear that in opposition to a thinking that is built on the distinction between thinking and being,

an originary thought is rather to be grounded in a fundamental affiliation of the two. We have to think both: the originary unity of thinking and being, as well as the originary distinction and split between them. Thinking and being are one, although they are to be distinguished. Via the moments of “becoming” and “seeming,” the “restriction” of being leads us to the moment of thought as the most important form of “restriction.” It is in thought that it is decided whether existing things are understood in touch with being qua being, or whether they are misunderstood as things that are simply at our disposal. It is being decided—as a question.

We enter a very complicated point of the discussion, because it is here that Heidegger seeks to turn around the false understanding of thought and to establish the position of the human being in regards to the originary understanding of the relation of thinking and being. Thought is the angle from which the problem of metaphysics can be turned around. The last restriction is the distinction between being and the ought: Once thought is established as logos, and therewith as language, being becomes determined as idea. To determine being as an idea prepares for the highest idea, the idea of the good, and this highest idea introduces a distance to being, it is the idea of how being ought to be. The “ought” thus is not really a question for Heidegger, because it comes after the decision on being is made.

What is a metaphysical vocation? We can see now that a metaphysical vocation is grounded in an existent state of things, but grounded as an absence in the midst of existent beings. And it is a call to exceed the realm of the existent to make space for being qua being. With the taking place of metaphysics there necessarily also comes a call for its transgression as inscribed into the realm of beings. And this call demands first and foremost an active change in thought. It is a change in thought—a change in the distinction of being and thought—that guides the way to a different understanding of the distinction between being, on the one side, and becoming, seeming and the ought, on the other.

Thus, the metaphysical vocation is a consequence of Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics. But this vocation is in a strict sense not given; it is the result of an absence of truth. And if it is thought that decides upon the vocation, then thought does not only present the angle from which metaphysics can be exceeded, but also claims that there is a vocation. In this regard, the claim of a metaphysical vocation as such is not the attempt to describe the situation; it rather needs to be understood as an attempt to think. To think the loss is a decision in thought. But then again, the claim that it is the German people that bear the metaphysical vocation is a decision to fill in the place, to invent the missing people. For the loss of the sense of being can be claimed at any place in the realm of metaphysics. There is no indication of it within the realm of beings, and thus a change of method needs to be undertaken. The change of method consists in a restriction of being and revolves around a change of thought: precisely because being is of a different order than beings. But while proclaiming being to be of a different order than beings, to take Germany as the point of reference indicates that the loss of being is reflected on the realm of beings and unfolds in different degrees. To take Germany as a point of reference is not a thought.

3.

If we recall reading Heidegger's infamous *Rektoratsrede* for the first time, we might remember being repelled by its tone, the vocabulary of leading and leadership (*Führen* and *Führerschaft*), of rank, the German people, its vocation, duty, will, and power. It is a very, very strange text due to a double game Heidegger is staging. A double game of which, in the end, it is hard to tell whether this doubling is not rather a thought that combines two sides of a single endeavor.

Heidegger gives an account of the relation between different aspects. First, he introduces what could be considered a subjective

aspect of the university: the relation between teachers and students, the subjective necessity of an inner will and self-assertion. Second, he elaborates on what could be considered an objective aspect: the necessity of philosophy for the organization of science, and therefore philosophy's ranking as a *prima philosophia*. And as the third moment, we find the threshold, the mediation between these two sides, we find a link between the practical-political-historical situation and the specific situation of the university. But this third moment is not only a reference to the world outside of the university; it is rather the link between the subjective and the objective moment: it is the question of the university as a practical-historical-political place and as the actuality of the spirit. The university is the place at which the historical and the ideal either intersect or are bound in a real thought.

Combining, not paralleling, these three aspects, the inner kernel of Heidegger's speech is his vision of the future organization of a student body that is again oriented by the truth of freedom. Heidegger describes three bonds that bind the student body: "Labor Service," "Armed Service," and "Knowledge Service" (Heidegger 2003, p. 8). The first bond of the "Labor Service" "binds" the students "into the community of the people. It obligates to help carry the burden and to participate actively in the troubles, endeavors, and skills of all the estates (*Stände*) and members" (*ibid.*, p. 7). The second bond of the "Armed Service" "binds to the honor and destiny of the nation in the midst of other peoples. It demands the readiness, secured by knowledge and skill and tightened by discipline, to give all" (*ibid.*, p. 8). And then, finally, the third bond of the "Knowledge Service" "binds [the students] to the spiritual mission of the German people. This people shapes its fate by placing its history into the openness of the overwhelming power of all the world-shaping powers of human being (*Dasein*) and by always renewing the battle for its spiritual world. Thus, exposed to the most extreme questionableness of its own being (*Dasein*), this people wills to be a spiritual people.

It demands of itself and for itself that its leaders and guardians possess the strictest clarity of the highest, widest, and richest knowledge" (*ibid.*).

A few lines later, Heidegger translates the three services into bonds "by the people, to the destiny of the state, in a spiritual mission" and calls them "equally necessary and of equal rank" (*ibid.*). The People, the State, and the Spiritual Mission are three parameters on the level of being. Perhaps the seemingly most empirical paradigm is the figure of the state, which here seems to inscribe Heidegger's discourse directly into the existing state. But Heidegger's interest is, as we have to remind ourselves, different. In the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, we find a remark on the state. Heidegger asks: "A state—it is. What does its Being consist in? In the fact that the state police arrest a suspect, or that in a ministry of the Reich so and so many typewriters clatter away and record the dictation of state secretaries and ministers?" (Heidegger 2014, p. 39) It does not. Rather the being of the states needs to be referred to the categories mentioned in the context of the "Armed service": honor, destiny, knowledge, discipline.

The second notion, the notion of the people, might lead us back to paragraph 74 of *Being and Time*, in which Heidegger declares the being-there, the *Dasein*, as being always a being-with: As such, being-there is always already collective, and the historical name for this community is the people.² So, it is from these notions (the people, the state) that one could work one's way backwards through Heidegger's oeuvre and discuss its problematic implications. But it is also here that it becomes necessary to take a closer look at Heidegger's tonality in the text and to discern the actual content. On the level of its pure content, of what is being said, it is very difficult to prove that this text is fascist. The real problem

² "But if fateful Dasein essentially exists as being-in-the-world in being-with others, then its occurrence is an occurrence-with and is determined as destiny [*Geschick*]. With this term, we designate the occurrence of the community of a people." (Heidegger 2010a, p. 366)

is a doubling of the discourse, an inscription of philosophically determined concepts into the world of simultaneous *doxa*.

First of all, the tripartite structure—Labor, Military and Knowledge—addresses a structure that is of far more fundamental relevance for Heidegger’s thought than some definitions of the state or the people, which in Heidegger’s own understanding only scratch the surface. This fundamental structure is Plato’s ideal *polis*, which is built around three estates: producers, warriors and rulers. As it’s well known, in Plato’s understanding the ideal ruler would be the philosopher. Heidegger’s structure of the university reproduces this structure of producers, warriors and rulers in the terms of Labor Service, Armed Service and Knowledge Service. Thus, the discourse on the university envisages an ideal state in which the philosophers rule, although in a very specific manner. It is already here that it becomes evident that philosophy has to take on a different role in relation to the tripartite structure of “people–state–spiritual mission” and to their “equal rank” and “equal necessity.” We will see that this equality springs from philosophy as its condition; it emerges from philosophy as a condition of a human being that questions its being. We will also see that it is philosophy that enables a people to be its being—as a reality of language—in the state—as a reality of the image. Philosophy is the opening, a question, toward real film.

But first of all, one needs to recall that for Heidegger it is precisely Plato who is the first manifestation of a decay of the question of being qua being: It is Plato who degrades seeming into pure seeming and thus introduces the gap between the existent thing that has a recognizable visible form and the being of the idea that is at a distance from being as existent. At the same time, however, Plato’s thought represents the Greek constellation of man and being. This Greek thought is decisively different from our modern conception of man and being. This difference revolves around the sight and hearing of being. In *The Age of the World Picture*, Heidegger writes:

To be looked at by beings, to be included and maintained and so supported by their openness, to be driven about by their conflict and marked by their dividedness, that is the essence of humanity in the great age of Greece. In order to fulfill his essence, therefore, man has to gather (λεγειν) and save (σωζειν), catch up and preserve, the self-opening in its openness; and he must remain exposed to all of its divisive confusion. Greek humanity is the receiver [*Vernehmer*] of beings, which is the reason that, in the age of the Greeks, the world can never become picture. (Heidegger 2002, p. 68)

But if the Greek world can never become a picture, this is not only because of a different conception of sight in relation to being, but also because of a different relation to hearing that needs to be mentioned. In the winter semester of 1933/34, Heidegger gave a course on *The Essence of Truth*, a close reading of Plato's allegory of the cave. This course begins with a long introduction on the question of essence, which leads to the relation between truth and language. If the problem of sight corresponds to the question of the idea, the problem of hearing corresponds to the question of language, as Heidegger makes clear in a short observation in the later passages on Plato:

But alongside this, another fact also emerges, even if late—that is, first with *Aristotle*—a fact that rules over Greek Dasein as essentially as ideas and seeing. This is *hearing*. Indeed, Aristotle asks whether hearing might not somehow be the higher sense and, accordingly, whether it might condition the higher comportment of human beings.

In this context, hearing and seeing are not conceived of as confined to mere sense perception; rather, they are taken more broadly, as listening to what has been spoken, hearing the word of the other. *Language* is the fundamental element of the being-with-one-another of human beings. For the Greeks, *discourse* is a defining moment for the essence of human beings. The human being is a ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, that is, the sort of living being that has the capacity for talk, the sort that, insofar as it exists, *speaks out* to others. (Heidegger 2010b, p. 123)

Language and logos are the structures that found the political community in the figure of the state: “This with-one-another cannot be understood as based on the fact that there are many human beings whom one must keep in order; instead, we belong with one another to the state, we exist on the basis of the state. And this existence fulfills itself and takes shape through discourse, λόγος.” (*Ibid.*)

Just like language, ideas too are produced. But even if we “exist on the basis of the state,” there is a difference between the people and the state. The essence of the human being is its being-with-others as it is founded in language. Thus, the state is not a simple principle of order; it is rather that which binds those who are-with-others to a commonality. This function of binding is what Heidegger ascribes to the idea. “The ideas *are*,” as Heidegger states in his seminar on the *Essence of Truth*, “at all only *in* and *through* a *beholding* that first creates what can be beheld, a special sort of *creative seeing*” (*ibid.*, p. 133). This creative seeing refers to itself: “this catching sight is a self-binding.” (*Ibid.*, p. 135)

This tells us three things about ideas: They are a multiplicity (*ibid.*), they are created, and they bind. Only in this sense do they *precede*: “So the understanding and experience of the idea is the precedent that must be comprehended in order to understand the particular. The view of the idea *opens up* the view to the Being of the particular.” (*Ibid.*) Thus, we could understand the state as the realization of the idea that binds the people. The existence to which it refers (“we exist on the basis of the state”) connotes the creation of a sight of being, which is the form in which the human being exists in relation to its being. Still, the binding via the creation of the idea is a binding that is opposed to any idea of a stipulated order. It is better understood as the sight that corresponds to a question upon being.

This is a further consequence that Heidegger draws from Plato’s allegory of the cave:

With respect to what genuinely is, there are no truth and openness *in themselves* any more than there are ideas in themselves; rather, openness *becomes*, and it becomes only in the innermost essential relationship with *human beings*. Only insofar as the human being *exists* in a definite *history* are beings given, is truth given. There is no truth given in itself; rather, truth is *decision* and *fate* for human beings; it is something *human*. (Heidegger 2010b, p. 134)

Sight and hearing mark the essential paradigms of the human being who is in a relation to truth: Truth, in other words, is an audiovisual reality of the human being as such, an audiovisual reality that the human being essentially has to take on and to decide upon. Heidegger takes this “liberation” to be the human being’s “history”: “*an innermost change in the Being of man.*” (*Ibid.*, p. 157) History is being taken on and decided as the opening of the human being toward the question of being. In this positioning of the human being toward being, sight becomes a process of the creation of a real image (a real idea) of openness, while hearing becomes the opening toward the real language of being. Sight and hearing intersect in the question of being, as they intersect in the reality of their being. This then is history, the creation of a different reality of the human being in its language and in its sight. It is, at one and the same time, a realization of a commonality via its language *and* of a binding link via its idea.

Film and radio as technological semblants present the modern inversion of this conception of truth. Instead of a creation of an opening toward being, they frame sight and hearing as processes of the repetitive sameness of the *Bestand*. *Bestand* is the essence of truth (of sight and hearing) that has fallen out of the essence. The difficulty then is not to react to radio and film with the abolishment of the image and sound; rather, the difficulty is the necessity to open an access to another film, another language. How and where can the possibility of this process begin? Heidegger has a precise understanding of the figure that needs to take on the role of leading us out of the cavern in which the wrong film is shown.

The one that leaves the cavern and later returns to it is no other than the philosopher:

This grounding, fundamental happening in which the *essence of truth develops through human history*—and in this history, man acquires this inner steadfastness—this fundamental happening is *philosophy*. (Heidegger 2010b, p. 158)

The one returning, of course, is not the *professional* philosopher. The philosopher addressed here is the one who takes on and decides the history of the human being, thus liberating herself, while continuously returning to the cave at the risk of her own death.³ The philosopher at issue here is not a professional philosopher in the sense of providing the answers (there are no answers in themselves, just like there is no truth in itself), but a philosopher characterized by a “*distinctive questioning*” (*ibid.*, p. 159). Thus, a further reformulation is possible: The human being has to question its being at the risk of death, and it is this questioning that unconceals its essence as a spatial and temporal reality, a reality of sound and vision, a reality to be heard and spoken, to be seen and to become visible.

Notwithstanding the importance that Heidegger attributes to the role of the philosopher, he is still by far not a Platonist. As we saw, the project follows a different line, one of repetition and scission. Plato is the origin of the scission, at which Greek thought loses itself. A repetition of Plato is an intervention that is directed at this origin with the aim of repeating the possibility of a sight and a hearing as an opening toward being, as well as of opposing the structural moment in which sight and hearing are respectively reduced to an image and the data of the *Bestand*.

It is here, in Plato, that the problem of modernity (the problem paradigmatically culminating in radio and film) finds

³ “*This* philosopher exposes himself to the fate of death, death in the cave at the hands of the powerful cave dwellers who set the standards in the cave.” (Heidegger 2010b, p. 140)

its beginning. For it is Plato who in the model of the idea first foregrounds being as something recognizable.

“On the other hand, however, is the fact that the beingness of beings is defined, for Plato, as εἶδος (appearance, view). This is the presupposition which—long prevailing only mediately, in concealment and long in advance—predestined the world’s having to become picture” (Heidegger 2002, p. 69). It is in the same text (*The Age of the World Picture*) that we find the broader, technical figure of the argument against a specific sort of image. This figure is that of representation, but Heidegger is very careful in emphasizing the specific peculiarity created by representation:

In distinction from the Greek apprehension, modern representing, whose signification is first expressed by the word *repraesentatio*, means something quite different. Representation [*Vor-stellen*] here means: to bring the present-at-hand before one as something standing over-and-against, to relate it to oneself, the representer, and, in this relation, to force it back to oneself as the norm-giving domain. Where this happens man “puts himself in the picture” concerning beings. When, however, in this way, he does this, he places himself in the scene; in, that is, the sphere of what is generally and publicly represented. And what goes along with this is that man sets himself forth as the scene in which, henceforth, beings must set-themselves-before, present themselves—be, that is to say, in the picture. Man becomes the representative [*Repräsentant*] of beings in the sense of the objective. (Heidegger 2002, p. 69)

Man’s “putting himself in the picture” is not simply a change of perspective or a change in the understanding of the human being. Rather, it is a consequence of the necessary development of technology, the latter standing for a necessary link in the relation between the human being and its being. The film’s image, although rarely mentioned by Heidegger, is more important than the theory of representation because “modern representing” is brought about as a change of reality, as a change of sight and hearing, a change in the image and the sound of being. This is the real invention of

the picture that changes the perspective on being. But still, the necessity of this development is not hopeless. At any point, the human being is capable of questioning his or her being and is thereby able to take on and decide his or her own history. The human being is able to create a sight and a hearing; he or she is able to create truth with the mean of his or her own existence. To interrupt the film of representation with the reality of a different sound and a different image, i.e. with the creation of a different film in reality, one that makes the image to be real, does not mean to react against representation in its Platonic detachment from the real. It does not imply a critique of faulty nearness of things which are actually remote; such a critique would imply that the faulty nearness could simply be abolished by returning to the remoteness of the remote and to the nearness of the near. The still persistent problem is that even what is near can be remote and what is remote can be near. What is required is a different orientation of the picture and thus the creation of a different picture, one that integrates the human being. But the human being would not be integrated in this different picture as just a further element of the series of beings, but rather as the opening which realizes the question of being. To create a different picture does not mean to oppose representation, but to invert it from within, to turn it inside out: What is hidden and concealed within representation, is the question of the essence of all represented beings; if turned inside out, the question results in a different sight and hearing, that is, a different commonality and link. Against the materiality of the technical development, Heidegger proposes the openness of a questioning of being that unfolds its own reality, its own sight and hearing, its own language and image. It is here that Heidegger can also be understood to pursue not only a return to and scission of Plato, but also an inversion of German idealism.

At this point we have to return to the *Rektoratsrede*. How are we to interpret the fact that one of the most notorious anti-Platonists of the 20th century takes Plato's *Republic* as the model for his vision of the fascist state in which he wants to participate?

The first reason for this is the utmost importance that Heidegger attributes to the role of the philosopher. Heidegger moves from the notion of the philosopher as the best ruler of the state to the program of philosophy as the essential science of the university. Philosophy is the only science that is capable of giving a sense of order to the different sciences, because the specificity of the singular sciences cannot be understood without philosophy. Philosophy is needed to explain and establish the differences between the singular sciences. Philosophy therefore is the leading science in the university. But then again, the university is the place at which the youth is educated. And if the historical time demands the fulfillment of a metaphysical vocation, then the youth has to be prepared, not for different kinds of professional occupations, but precisely for spiritual leadership: for deciding and taking on the fate of history. Thus, the university prepares the youth for the fulfillment of the metaphysical vocation of the people, and without philosophy the necessary spiritual leadership cannot be attained. Thus, philosophers are strictly speaking not thought of as having to become kings; rather, they are thought to be the most important transmitters: They transmit the historical vocation by which they are led to others. Philosophers are the ones who—at risk of death—climb back into the cavern to liberate the others and to become who they are. In this sense, philosophers do in fact *lead* the way, but they lead by questioning and resisting answers. In the very first lines of the *Rektoratsrede*, Heidegger implicitly establishes a link between the metaphysical vocation of the German people and the role of the philosopher:

The assumption of the rectorate is the commitment to the *spiritual* leadership of this institution of higher learning. The following of teachers and students awakens and grows strong only from a true and joint rootedness in the essence of the German university. This essence, however, gains clarity, rank, and power only when first of all and at all times the leaders are themselves led—led by that unyielding spiritual mission that forces the fate of the German people to bear the stamp of its history. (Heidegger 2003, p. 2)

The German word is, of course, *die Führer*, “leaders” who themselves have to be *geführt*, “led” (Heidegger 2000, p. 107). *Führen*, “to lead,” is ascribed to the questioning philosopher. But, of course, taken outside of the context of Platonic philosophy, *führen* has a different reference, relating to the German political reality and insinuating an approval of the *Führer* as the leader who does not question and who does not lead others towards leading themselves.

The second decisive moment becomes obvious when considered within the contexts of Heidegger’s other writings. In his writings from the 1930s, Heidegger is obsessed with the question of the return to the beginning. The metaphysical vocation amounts to the task of reproducing the originary Greek beginning: The beginning at which being was for the first time thought by the human being. And since it is only in thought that being qua being can present itself and since the human being *essentially* is, this beginning is not only the beginning of something, but a beginning in the sense of an originary constellation:

This beginning is the departure, the setting out, of Greek philosophy. Here, for the first time, Western man rises himself up from a popular base and, by virtue of his language, stands up to *the totality of what is* which he questions and conceives as the being that it is. All science is philosophy, whether it knows and wills it—or not. All science remains bound to that beginning of philosophy. (Heidegger 2003, pp. 3–4)

For Heidegger, this beginning is not a beginning that is lost in the past, but one that is still present in its “greatness”: If something was great in its beginning, then “*beginning* of this great thing remains what is *greatest* about it” (*ibid.*, p. 5). And thus, he concludes, the “beginning still is. It does not lie *behind us*, as something that was long ago, but stands *before us*. As what is greatest, the beginning has passed in advance beyond all that is to come and also beyond us as well. The beginning has invaded

our future. There it awaits us, as the distant command bidding us catch up with its greatness." (*Ibid.*)

So, we do not have to return to the Greek beginning in the sense of returning to the past; rather, we have to return to the beginning that is still with us. We have to return to the beginning in the present. Essentially, we have to return to ourselves. Thus, this second moment linking Heidegger's *Rektoratsrede* with Plato's republic is the question of the return as the return of the philosopher to the Greek moment, at which the two tendencies of history originally parted paths.

But what does this return actually imply? It means, first of all, to ask again what Heidegger in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* called the "prior question," namely the question of "How does it stand with being?" To ask this question, Heidegger explains in the *Introduction*, "means nothing less than to *repeat and retrieve* [wieder-holen] the inception of our historical-spiritual Dasein, in order to transform it into the other inception. Such a thing is possible. It is in fact the definitive form of history, because it has its onset in a happening that grounds history." (Heidegger 2014, p. 43) And as it is not a return in the temporal sense, but rather a repeating and retrieving, the renewed beginning is to begin "*more originally*, and with all the strangeness, darkness, insecurity." The philosopher works at the threat of losing her life. The beginning always presents a risk, and the human being needs to break out of his or her "facilitations," *Bahnungen* (Heidegger 1976, p. 161). A certain violence is needed to counter the violence with which beings impose themselves. Violence becomes a question, which Heidegger discusses at length in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, but also in the seminar on the *Essence of Truth*.⁴ Violence is clearly what is needed at the point at which a human being has not

⁴ In the *Introduction*, the discussion unfolds in the paragraphs 51–56 (Heidegger 2014, pp. 155–219). The seminar begins with an introduction to Heraclitus, while the discussion on the necessity of struggle is developed in Heidegger 2010b, pp. 72–98.

only *taken over* his or her history as a fate, but also has to *decide it*. After the change of method in the *Introduction*, i.e. after the restriction of being, Heidegger presents parts of his arguments by interpreting a passage of *Antigone*. He states: “The authentic interpretation must show what does not stand there in the words and nevertheless is said. For this, the interpretation must necessarily use violence.” (Heidegger 2014, p. 180) Again, this violence is the violence of the philosopher who dares to pose the question.

Thus, here we find a precise indication of what it means to return to Plato in the context of the *Rektorsrede*. On the one hand, Plato is the moment in the originary constellation of being that predestines the decay of this question. On the other hand, we see that the point of decay revolves around the moment of the picture. To have the world represented in front of the human beholder is what Heidegger considers to be the modern constellation. It is the concealment of the originary opening. The human being loses sight of being once the latter is represented as a stock of things at our disposal, i.e. as a consequence of the unfolding of technology.

The more things are considered to be objective parts of this picture, the more the subject arises as the opposite figure. This turn to the individual enables anthropology to become the main foundation of thought from the 19th century onwards. And under the premise of anthropology and the world being a picture, it is the worldview that comes into existence—the *Weltanschauung*. National Socialism, as Heidegger explains some pages later in the “appendices” or *Zusätze* to *The Age of the World Picture*, is precisely this: a worldview, a *Weltanschauung*: “The world view indeed needs and makes use of philosophical erudition, but it needs no philosophy since, as world view, it has already adopted its own interpretation and structuring of what is.” (Heidegger 2002, p. 75) Right before these lines he states: “The laborious fabrication of such absurd entities as ‘National Socialist philosophies,’ on the other hand, merely creates confusion.” (*Ibid.*) National Socialism

cannot have a philosophy. Heidegger, in his own understanding, cannot be a philosopher of National Socialism.

But if the *Rektorsrede* is not Heidegger's attempt to become the philosopher of National Socialism, what is it then? With Heidegger, we can also understand National Socialism to be one variant of the technical picture that the world has become. National Socialism is in itself a film. But as a film that is real, a film that presents itself as real, it shows us the semblance not as detached from being but as pertaining to it. Hence, it is a film that starts right where it has to start by overturning the Platonic film of modernity. In the *Rektorsrede* at least, National Socialism presents itself as the inversion of the Platonic film of modernity, an inversion that re-opens the originary question of being. National Socialism, in Heidegger's view, presents itself as the true Platonism.

Heidegger thinks that he can see and hear the fate of history; and as a philosopher he is convinced that he can take on the fate and decide history by inscribing the question of being into reality. If film and radio as paradigms of modern technology announce and make visible the end of the essential unconcealing practice of the human being—if they announce and make visible the end of the human being in its essence—then the realization of a different sight and hearing is the necessary vocation. This vocation calls for an inversion of Platonism to reveal its originary scission that is brought about as human being's essential questioning of being. This return is a fundamental question that the human being has to pose. But at the same time, this return, this question, this scission is to be unfolded as a reality, as an act of sight and hearing. The question becomes a being. It is a will to overcome the loss, to recuperate the lost contact with being. Implicitly and immediately the questioning changes into an answer.

Heidegger stages a double game: The philosopher as the true *Führer* and the *Führer* as a philosopher. It is a vision that conceals a deeper desire, namely to overcome philosophy, to put an end

to philosophy in the moment of its realization. The double game still upholds the ambivalence of a question (the philosopher as the true *Führer*) turned into an answer (the *Führer* being the true philosopher). The philosopher as *Führer* asks the question; the *Führer* as philosopher asks no longer. But the double game unmasks itself as it has to specify its location and indicate where the scene takes place. There could not be a double game of staging and reality, of question and answer, if there weren't a place. And for Heidegger, the double game takes place in Germany. Film becomes a real film, the question becomes an answer and philosophy becomes a *Weltanschauung*. Philosophy thus finds its end. But philosophy has already become a *Weltanschauung* the moment when the need for a question of being becomes a specific site assigned. The moment the double game unmasks itself, it loses the terrible irritation of the semblance, it turns real, it loses itself. Thus, the secret desire of the presentation of a different hearing and seeing of being under the lead of the questioning philosopher is the annihilation of philosophy presented within philosophy. The secret desire is to give the question itself the structure of a being, existing answer. The philosophical technology comes to an end because the evil apparatus of this technology as it reveals itself in philosophy's own eyes and ears will abolish it. The *Führer* as philosopher dissolves philosophy, and from what was thought to be a question, in the end, there is nothing more to see and to hear than a finite answer—strangely, in the end, we find a pure repetition of the sound of the machine replacing the question.

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